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TESTIMONY OF MARK DRISCOLL

RE: UCONN HEALTH BUDGET

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HEARING – FEBRUARY 15, 2017

My name is Mark Driscoll, I have been a Wallingford resident for almost 20 years. I am a biotech entrepreneur who started the company Shoreline Biome at UConn's Technology Incubation Program (TIP) in Farmington in 2015. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you tonight as you consider budget priorities.

As a long term resident I think that the state will have to actively foster new businesses and industries to be able to overcome our seemingly annual budget crisis. Given our increasing debt obligations it appears that there is almost no way that we will be able to cut our way to a successful budget in Connecticut in the long term. Fortunately, I see evidence firsthand that efforts championed by the Governor and Legislature to set up a tech startup ecosystem are starting to tap into the vast latent growth potential that we have in Connecticut.

As the founder of a high tech startup business, I know that to foster growth, I have to invest while managing resources wisely. As legislators, you have to do the same. I want to share a few observations as an example of how the state's investments in the University of Connecticut and UConn Health have influenced the growth of our high tech manufacturing and R+D organization.

First and most importantly, UConn and UConn Health are vital components of the foundation of a robust ecosystem that is needed for the high tech life science businesses and industries of today to be successful. For example, my company hired a student from the UConn Master's program after his summer internship program ended. Having institutions like UConn and UConn Health, who provide high tech education to our future workforce, and internship programs that benefit both students and companies, working with us, a new Farmington TIP incubator company has far more impact than each alone. The result is that a high tech Connecticut company adds a high paying job for a student trained at UConn.

UConn and UConn Health also provide tremendous value in the collaborations they provide to companies like mine who are trying to grow and commercialize our inventions. We are collaborating with Joerg Graf at UConn and Peter Setlow at UConn Health, both of whom are globally recognized experts in their fields, their proximity is an important element in our collaboration as we work to move academic advancements into commercial opportunity. As our product nears launch, the proximity of the UConn Health allows us to engage with highly accomplished health care experts to explore how to use our product to lead the development of the next generation of diagnostics and therapeutics.

The impact of UConn Health and UConn are further amplified by the growing number of interactions with the Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine (JAX). Our scientific co-founder George Weinstock is from JAX, and we have put together a series of collaborations that combine the strengths



of UConn Health, JAX, Shoreline Biome, and UConn. Shoreline Biome's presence at the geographical center of this ecosystem has been made possible by the UConn TIP tech incubator in Farmington. TIP was expanded at UConn Health in Farmington as part of Bioscience Connecticut, a visionary initiative championed by Governor Malloy and the Legislature in 2011. TIP provides valuable support and facilitates collaborations for start-up bioscience and tech companies in Connecticut, and it has been instrumental in helping us get our company off the ground and guiding us as we grow.

It is important to note that a thriving ecosystem depends on investors and investor funding groups, private sources as well as the Connecticut Bioscience Innovation Fund and Connecticut Innovations. Multiple sources of investment funding is a key element to attracting and growing startup companies. CBIF and CI funding have helped Shoreline Biome leverage private funding to grow the company, multiplying the effect of the investments.

An additional major ecosystem requirement is that we retain high tech talent. Companies need to know that they can access a significant talent pool. High tech employees need to know that there are many local companies competing for their skills. The healthiest ecosystems have enough base to grow and retain talent. UConn, as I mentioned, produces graduates that can compete in any market, including Boston and San Francisco, but we want to keep them here. The recent UConn TIP expansion is an important new element to keeping our high tech workers in the state. For example, when Roche folded the Branford tech startup 454 Life Sciences, Shoreline Biome was able to bring in a mechanical engineer, QA development specialist and a Research Scientist who, in addition to my co-founder and me, might have left the state altogether. Our next priority is to look for skilled workers in high tech manufacturing, and hire to staff production, sales and support. An additional underappreciated requirement to retain highly educated workforce is to retain their families by having excellent state educational institutions. Investment in UConn has resulted in a university that is now among the top choices of students across the country and the globe. Maintaining and growing UConn's reputation, just as high tech companies are recognizing Connecticut as an up-and-coming biotech hub provides a crucial advantage to the state.

My company's experience with the biotech ecosystem in Connecticut shows that the elements for success are coming together as intended by the initiatives we've started such as Bioscience CT at UConn Health and Next Gen at UConn. The TIP expansion shows that we are really at the beginning, where over the next decade we can expect our long term investment to begin yielding real growth. Importantly, the plan has included strong support for Connecticut institutions including UConn Health, UConn, the TIP, the internship program championed by Carolyn Dealy, the Jackson Laboratory, as well as startup funding mechanisms. I know that you are faced with stark choices with budget priorities. I urge you to consider that continued strong investment in UConn and UConn Health as part of our economic growth plan should remain a high priority as we look for long term solutions to our budget problems in Connecticut.